

WE HAVE A STORY TO TELL

Native Peoples of the Chesapeake Region



DEDICATION



Group of Chickahominy Indians at the Chickahominy River, Virginia, 1918. Photo by Frank G. Speck.

***For the Native Americans of the Chesapeake region—past,
present, and future. We honor your strength and endurance.
Thank you for welcoming us to your Native place.***

Education Office of the National Museum of the American Indian

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INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The Native peoples of the Chesapeake Bay region were among the first in the Western Hemisphere to encounter European explorers and colonists. Their stories, however, have usually been told by others, and usually only when their history helps to shed light on the birth and early development of the English colonies and the United States. Their perspectives have been overlooked and ignored in exhibitions, the media, educational materials, and most histories of the region. This guide offers contemporary Native perspectives about the historical experiences of the Native Americans of the Chesapeake, in particular, the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway peoples.

The history of the Native Americans of the Chesapeake region is a remarkable story of resilience and survival. [Goddard, 1978; Feest, 1978; Rountree, 1989 and 1990; Potter, 1993; Tayac, 1999] For thousands of years, until the late sixteenth century, they were sustained by and lived in balance with a verdant, pristine, and generous environment. The region was heavily populated and vibrant with human activity. The people spoke languages that were part of the immense Algonquian language family that reached from the Southeast up the Northeast coast into what is now Canada, across to the Great Lakes and even to some parts of the Great Plains and what is now California. These languages were not mutually intelligible but they bore enough similarities to enable peoples of the Chesapeake region to communicate with one another.

The communities were organized under chiefdoms, a sophisticated and multi-layered system of government. They practiced diplomacy and developed political and military alliances. They were deeply spiritual and expressed their religious values and beliefs in cyclical ceremonies and rituals that kept their world in balance. Long before

Europeans arrived, Native people developed and participated in widespread trade systems that brought them into contact with people, goods, and ideas from distant places. Although change has always been part of Native American cultures and lives, Chesapeake peoples' ways of life were destroyed in a relatively brief period of time when contact with Europeans occurred. Confronted with a catastrophic tidal wave of change, they incurred devastating losses and had to summon every ounce of ingenuity and strength to survive. Some were overwhelmed and extinguished, but some remain to tell their stories today. One of their descendants, Dr. Gabrielle Tayac, a member of the Piscataway Nation of Maryland, is the coauthor of this guide.

We Have a Story to Tell: The Native Peoples of the Chesapeake Region is intended for use with students in grades 9-12. Ways of life before contact with Europeans are briefly introduced. This is followed by coverage of the period of colonization (1607) through the present. The guide focuses especially on how Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway peoples responded to the upheavals that began with the colonial period. It includes activities that fix attention on critical contemporary issues that affect Native communities in the region.

Educators are encouraged to use these materials as an introduction to ongoing studies of the Native peoples of the Chesapeake and other regions—past, present, and future. The interactions between the colonists and the Natives of the Chesapeake established a pattern of relations that would persist for centuries. This history offers students important new perspectives about the events that shaped the experiences of indigenous peoples throughout the continent, as well as the development of the United States.

A note about languages and pronunciation of place names, personal names, and other Algonquian language terms used in this guide. Although phonetic spellings of many Algonquian words remain, their precise pronunciation has been lost in many cases. Some tribes are working with linguists and other Algonquian-speaking tribes to reconstruct their languages. For this document, we offer below a modern-day pronunciation guide for regional tribes. For historic place names and other terms we recommend using the common International Phonetic Alphabet guidelines for phonetic pronunciation. Please note that the Monacan Indian Nation is one of eight state-recognized tribes in Virginia. Because they were not originally part of the Powhatan, Nanticoke, or Piscataway Chiefdoms, their history is not discussed in this guide.

Pamunkey	Puh-MUN-kee	Rappahannock	Rap-uh-HAN-ick
Mattaponi	MATTA-puh-nye	Nanticoke	NAN-ti-coke
Chickahominy	Chick-uh-HAH-muh-nee	Piscataway	Pih-SCAT-uh-way
Nansemond	NAN-suh-mawnd	Monacan	MAWN-uh-kuhn

LESSON PLAN

1. Overview

This lesson primarily covers the period from the early 1600s to the present. Students explore how colonial settlement and the establishment of the United States affected the Native Americans of the Chesapeake region, especially the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway peoples. Students will learn about the forces that resulted in the eradication of some tribes and how others survived. Students will also participate in small group projects to understand issues of critical importance to Chesapeake Native communities today. The lesson includes five sections:

- Warm up: lesson overview and preliminary discussion of the Native peoples of the Chesapeake region
- Map activity
- Independent reading and class discussion
- Small group project on critical contemporary issues, including group reports
- Summary class discussions

2. Materials provided

- Historical and contemporary maps of the Chesapeake region
- Reading texts
- Primary resource materials
- Warm-up, post-reading, and wrap-up questions
- Small group activity instructions
- List of additional resources

3. Grade Levels 9–12

4. Time needed 2–3 class periods with additional time for independent reading and study by students

5. Objectives Students will:

- Compare data on historical and contemporary maps;
- Answer questions demonstrating awareness of the overwhelming social, political, cultural, and military forces challenging the Chesapeake tribes during the colonial era;
- Describe ways in which the Nanticoke, Powhatan, and Piscataway communities are working to keep their cultures alive;
- Articulate a verbal or written opinion about an issue related to the struggle for survival among contemporary Native communities of the Chesapeake region.

6. Education Standards Addressed by this Lesson

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (High School)—National Council for the Social Studies

- I. Culture. Performance expectation “f”—Interpret patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding.
- II. Time, Continuity, and Change. Performance expectation “c”—Identify and describe significant historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures.
- IX. Global connections. Performance expectation “b”—Explain conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.

U.S. History Standards for Grades 5–12—National Center for History in the Schools

Era 2—Colonization and Settlement

Standard 1B—The student understands the European struggle for control of North America.

- Analyze relationships between Native Americans and English settlers.
- Analyze how various Native American societies changed as a result of the expanding European settlements and how they influenced European societies.

Era 4—Expansion and Reform

Standard 1B—The student understands federal and state Indian policies and the strategies for survival forged by Native Americans.

- Explain and evaluate the various strategies of Native Americans such as accommodation, revitalization, and resistance.

7. Lesson Procedures

Warm-up:

- Familiarize yourself with the content of the guide, the Introduction (page 2), and the student readings (pages 6-14 and 16-21).
- Provide an overview of the lesson and a brief introduction to the Native cultures of the Chesapeake region prior to European arrival. This information is covered in the Introduction and the Resources for Educators sections. Use the five “warm-up” questions (page 5) to facilitate the overview. Most students will probably not be able to answer these questions at this stage, but you can use them to illustrate what students will learn.

Map Activity:

- Copy and distribute “Map 1: Chesapeake Native Peoples, ca. 1610” (page 22), and “Map 2: Chesapeake Native Communities Today” (page 23).
- Compare the differences between tribal names and locations on the contemporary and the historical maps, in particular, changes in the number of tribes and the size of the territories.
- On the map of Native communities today, find the locations of each of the Powhatan tribes of Virginia (Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Upper Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Nansemond, and Rappahannock), the Piscataway of Maryland, and the Nanticoke of Delaware.
- Compare the historical map with a modern atlas of the region and locate contemporary cities, state boundaries, and so on.
- If students live in the Chesapeake region, ask them to identify the Native community closest to their own.

Independent Reading:

- Have students read the text entitled, “Native Peoples of the Chesapeake and the Enduring Effects of Colonialism.” Remind students to examine the primary resources provided with the text.
- Class discussion using the “Post-Reading Discussion Questions” (page 5).

Small Group Project and Class Presentation—Issues of Survival for Native Communities of the Chesapeake Region:

- Divide the class into small groups of two to four students each. Ensure that there are at least three groups, one for each research topic. All three topics should be covered so that all students will gain a more comprehensive understanding of issues faced by the communities. The research topics are: 1) The Effects of Treaty Making, 2) The Denial of Civil Rights, and 3) The Importance of Legal Recognition. Copy and distribute Instructions for Small Group Project, (page 15), to all students. Review the activity guidelines provided on the sheet.
- Assign each group an issue to study. Provide copies of the appropriate resource pages for every student. Be sure to point out the location of the reading text, the text study questions, the list of research documents, and the primary resource images and questions. Key research documents can be found on the Education section of the National Museum of the American Indian website. Links to the documents are provided on the instructions page. Tell students that these materials provide key supplemental information and encourage them to find more. Ensure that students have access to the internet and library resources for additional research.
- After students complete their projects, give each group about 15 minutes to present their issue and position to the class. Facilitate discussions following each presentation. Ask students to assess whether the group’s position was reasonable and well-defended. After all groups have reported, ask students to compare the positions taken by the groups and to identify similarities and differences.
- Final discussion using the “Wrap-Up Discussion Questions” (page 5).

8. Extensions

- Have students research the impact of European diseases on the Indians of the Chesapeake during the first 150 years following contact with Europeans.
- Have students research the American Indian Movement (AIM) of the 1960s–70s, and how it generated a resurgence of Native American pride and heightened America’s awareness of Native American issues. Some Chesapeake Native people participated in these national political events. The following website provides an introduction to key AIM activities: www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotaniland/activism.html. Have students examine AIM activities such as the takeover of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C. (1972), and the Longest Walk (1978).

LESSON QUESTIONS

Warm-Up:

- Who were the Native Americans in the Chesapeake region prior to European arrival in the Western Hemisphere?
- What was life like for them before 1600?
- What happened to them during the colonial period?
- What happened to them after the United States was founded?
- Where are they now?

Post-Reading Discussion:

- What were some of the reasons Indians and the English agreed to make treaties? Why do you think the English violated the treaties?
- The text explains how diseases affected Indian populations. Based on your reading, what other factors led to population decline? What was the effect of such decline?
- How did emigration from Maryland and Virginia both help and hurt Chesapeake Indians? How did William Penn’s “Holy Experiment” in Pennsylvania influence tribes’ decisions to leave the Chesapeake? What values are evident in the tapestry panel (page 9)?
- The English colonists believed that assimilation would lead to peace. Was complete assimilation of Indian people a reasonable goal? Why or why not?
- How did forced segregation affect the sense of community among Native peoples?
- Explain how efforts to maintain cultural traditions and to achieve civil rights have contributed to a sense of community among Chesapeake Indians today.

Wrap-Up Discussion:

- Have your views about Native peoples of the Chesapeake changed? How?
- What are the greatest challenges facing these people today?
- Is what happened to Chesapeake Native Americans happening to people elsewhere in the world today? In what ways?

NATIVE PEOPLES OF THE CHESAPEAKE REGION AND THE ENDURING EFFECTS OF COLONIALISM

When you look at the pieces of our people scattered about, it doesn't look like we have much. But put together, we have a lot. We have a story to tell.

—Tina Pierce Fragoso (Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape), *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 13, 2005.

Every place in the United States of America has an ongoing Native American story, and our nation's capital is no exception. Washington, D.C. sits in the Chesapeake Bay region, surrounded by Maryland and Virginia. For more than 10,000 years, Native peoples have created thriving societies along the shores of numerous rivers that feed into the beautiful and environmentally rich Chesapeake Bay. They lived in connection to the seasons and the natural resources of the region. They settled in villages made up of wooden longhouses inhabited by extended families. Labor was generally divided, with women responsible for agriculture and men for hunting. Everyone cooperated in harvesting fish and shellfish from bountiful rivers and estuaries. Throughout their histories these societies adapted to difficult circumstances and unforeseen changes. Adaptability has been necessary for survival of Native peoples and their cultures, even to the present day.

When the English established their first American colony in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, the Chesapeake Bay region included three major Native chiefdoms, systems of government made up of a group of tribes under the influence of a central chief. The three chiefdoms included the Powhatan, the Piscataway, and the Nanticoke. Most of the tribes living in the Chesapeake Bay region belonged to one of these three chiefdoms, although there were some tribes who kept their independence. [See map on page 22] The people spoke related languages from a language family known as Algonquian. The central chiefs were men selected from families that inherited and passed their leadership rights from generation to generation. They usually lived in larger towns and oversaw a system of village commanders, or *weroances*, who could be men or women. An elders council advised the chiefs. The members of the council were called *wisoes*, and decisions were made in a council house called the *matchcomoco*. Holy men—elders who conducted spiritual ceremonies—also had a voice in the chiefs' decisions. There were also

“medicine men,” who were tasked with physical and spiritual healing. Leaders called *cockarouses* assumed command in times of war. The chiefs were unlike European kings or emperors; they were expected to work like everyone else and usually made decisions in consultation with other leaders. [Feest, 1978; Rountree, 1989, 1990; Tayac, 1999; Hall, 1910; Hariot, 1972]

Most of the Chesapeake Native tribes who have survived and continue to thrive today descend from the Powhatan, Piscataway, and Nanticoke chiefdoms. The tribes that did not originally belong to a chiefdom often became part of one in order to be afforded greater protection from the colonists. Other independent tribes dispersed to various parts of the continent, where they merged with other tribes. Centuries of dispossession from their original lands have left far fewer Native tribes in the present than there were in 1607. [See map on page 22] Yet, the people remain and so do many Powhatan, Piscataway, and Nanticoke names on the landscape, evidence of the rich cultures that once inhabited the entire region. The nature of the struggles facing Chesapeake Native peoples today has changed, but they continue to live with the difficult legacy of colonial history.

Colonial Indian-White Relations

In some ways, the Jamestown colony served as the beginning of the United States of America. It was also the place where some of the first policies towards Native Americans were enacted. Many of the difficulties experienced by Chesapeake Natives were mirrored over the centuries by other Native Americans as other white settlers moved across the continent.

European Settlement and Conflict

The Spanish were the first Europeans known to have explored the Chesapeake. In 1562, the Spanish



Detail of 1562
Map of
America by
Diego Gutierrez,
showing Bahia
de Santa Maria.
Library of
Congress,
Geography and
Maps Division.

cartographer Diego Gutierrez recorded the Chesapeake Bay on a map. He called it the “Bahia de Santa Maria.” Because they were looking for gold and found none in the Chesapeake, the Spanish did not spend much time in the region. They did, however, capture a number of young Powhatan boys during their expeditions. These incidents unsettled the Powhatans and raised concerns about future contact with Europeans.

The English arrived in 1607, forty-five years after the Spanish. Their colony, Jamestown, was a business enterprise funded by the Virginia Company for the purpose of finding gold. The English colonists were not adept at farming in the North American soil and climate and lacked the skills for surviving in unfamiliar territory. Many died of starvation. During this early period, the Powhatan people took pity on the colonists and gave them food to help them survive.

Peaceful relations did not last long. At first, the Indians granted the English permission to live on pieces of land within their territories. The English saw this as a right to own and permanently occupy the land. For their part, Native people believed that the newcomers had no right to permanently possess Native lands. In addition, Native

people sometimes left their villages to hunt, fish, or gather resources. Frequently, they returned to their villages only to find the land occupied by colonists. The Powhatans grew increasingly angry as the colonists took over more of their lands. When the English began raiding Powhatan villages for food, sometimes killing women and children in the process, Native leaders retaliated. A series of wars started in the Chesapeake Bay region that continued through the seventeenth century. [Feest, Rountree, Tayac]

Loss of Life

In the first 100 years of contact, the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway suffered severe loss of life. Although it is difficult to obtain precise population figures, scholars estimate that the Powhatan chiefdom included about 12,000 people when Jamestown was settled in 1607. Only 1,000 were left by 1700. The Piscataway chiefdom had about 8,500 members at the time of English settlement, but only 300 remained by 1700. [Feest; Thornton, 1987]

Epidemic diseases were the primary cause of death. Native peoples had no immunity to new illnesses, including smallpox, cholera, and measles, which the Europeans brought to the Americas. Many tribes suffered huge losses—often, up to ninety percent of the population was wiped out. Because diseases spread from person to person, some communities were affected by European diseases transmitted by other Native peoples, and many populations were weakened even before contact with European settlers. In 1608, Chief Powhatan, who also was known as Wahunsenacawh, told the English explorer and trader Captain John Smith how diseases had affected his people:

You may understand that I having seene the death of all my people thrice, and not any one living of these three generations but my selfe...

—*Travels of Captaine John Smith*. NY: MacMillan, 1907.

Epidemics were not the only cause of death. Wars, loss of land, social upheaval, and disease combined to devastate Native communities. Population losses weakened Native culture. Oral tradition was critical for preserving cultural knowledge; when elders died, it was like having entire libraries burn down. [Feest; Rountree; Thornton; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman, 2006]

They gave us a piece of land that they termed as a reservation for the Piscataway people. They put us there, with the idea that they would protect us forever, took all weapons away from us and in turn gave them to a group of Indians who swore death to us, known as the Susquehannas. . . We found out we couldn't trust the Maryland colonists and our people fled.

—Chief Billy Redwing Tayac (Piscataway), 2002.

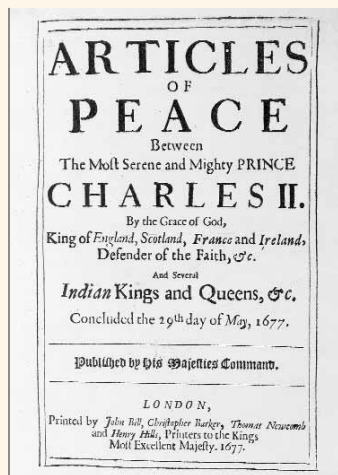
Treaties and the Loss of Land

As more and more English colonists flooded into the Chesapeake region, Native peoples lost more of their lands. These encroachments by the colonists led to violence, which the English attempted to quell by establishing

treaties with Native peoples. A treaty is an agreement between two nations that becomes a law. In their treaties, the Powhatan, Piscataway, and Nanticoke agreed to submit to English control in exchange for peace. The English promised Native peoples rights to hunt in their territories and to fair treatment under the law. The treaties also set aside smaller parcels of original Native territories

so that the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway could live undisturbed by settlers. These lands were called reservations, or “manors.” [Feest; Rountree; Tayac; Rountree and Davidson, 1997; Porter, 1987]

While the treaties sounded good on paper, most of their provisions were not enforced. English settlers moved onto reservation lands and restricted Native uses of non-reservation lands. By the 1700s, Piscataway, Nanticoke, and Powhatan treaty rights were largely ignored.



Treaty Between Virginia and the Indians 1677, cover page. Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division.



John Hall (1739–1797), after Benjamin West. William Penn's treaty with the Indians, when he founded the province of Pennsylvania in North America, 1681. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Native Responses to the Ongoing Challenges of Colonialism

The pressures on Chesapeake Native peoples mounted as the populations of the colonies and later the United States grew. From the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, the communities were forced to devise a number of strategies to survive and to keep their Native identities, histories, and cultures alive.

Emigration

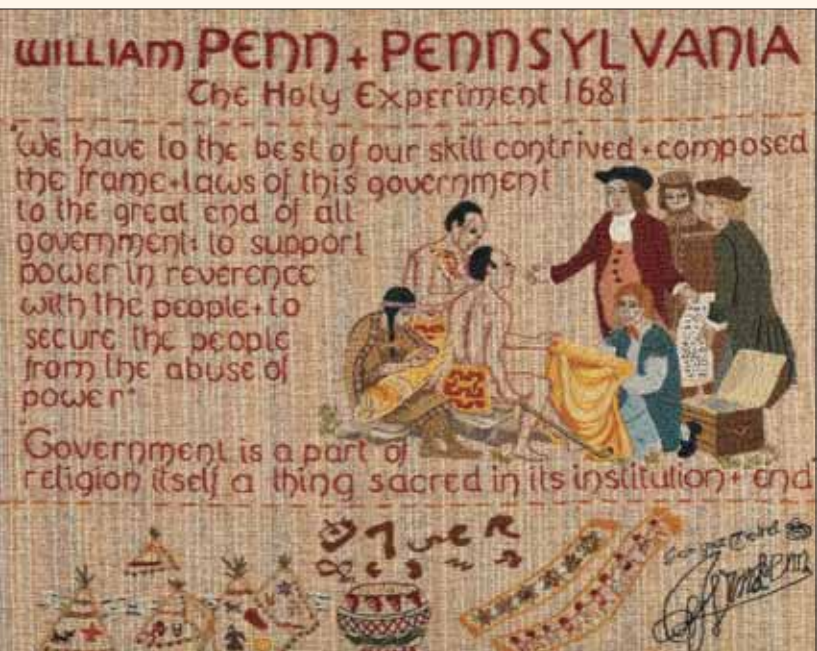
As the colonists acquired more and more Native lands, some tribes emigrated to other areas where they could live more peacefully. The Nanticoke and the Piscataway central chiefs and their councils convinced most of their people to move to Pennsylvania by the early 1700s. However, some of the people decided to remain. Despite the ongoing conflicts with the colonists, many Nanticoke and Piscataway people could not part with their original homeland. Some tribal members were able to become engaged in the colonial economy as farmers or in other occupations. [Feest; Rountree; Tayac; Porter; Weslager, 1948, 1978, 1983; Speck, 1922, 1927]

Pennsylvania's tolerant attitude toward Indians lured Nanticoke and Piscataway emigrants to the colony. William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, envisioned a society in which American Indians and whites would live as “neighbors and friends.” This was an important part of what Penn called a “holy experiment.” In a letter to the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) tribe, Penn expressed his hopes for an honorable peace:

I desire to win and gain your love and friendship by a kind, just and peaceable life.

—William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania 1680–1684: *A Documentary History*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

Looking to govern Native Americans who sought refuge in the colony, Penn formed a partnership with the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois Confederacy, a powerful alliance of Native nations in the Northeast. The Iroquois, once enemies of the Chesapeake chiefdoms, became



A Modern
Quaker
Tapestry,
William Penn
Panel, ©
Quaker
Tapestry
Scheme.

protectors of those Nanticoke and Piscataway who relocated. The Iroquois called the Piscataway the Conoy—a designation they eventually incorporated. They are now often referred to as the Piscataway Conoy. [Feest; Rountree and Davidson; Speck, 1927; Weslager, 1948, 1983]

Life was relatively peaceful for the Nanticoke and Piscataway in Pennsylvania until the French and Indian War broke out in 1754. The original harmony that William Penn hoped for suddenly vanished. Though few Pennsylvania tribes sided with the French, the English colony of Pennsylvania declared war on all Native peoples, even those who stayed neutral. At that point, some Nanticoke and Piscataway moved west to fight against the British. They would later join a movement of many tribes to form an American Indian country under the leadership of the Shawnee chief Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa. Others moved north to become members of the Iroquois Confederacy. [Ibid., Tanner, 1987]

The Continuing Struggle for Native Lands

The Native peoples of the Chesapeake region experienced enormous pressures to give up their lands over a long period of time. Except for the Mattaponi and Pamunkey, all tribes in the Chesapeake region that originally had reservations lost them.

Despite losing their lands, many tribes continued to live within the old boundaries of their original reservations, and still do today. The communities that retained their reservations set up new governments made up of a chief and a men's council. These governments were modeled after the colonial or state governments rather than the old chieftainships. [Speck; Rountree and Davidson; Porter; Feest; and Tayac]

The Pamunkey and Mattaponi have struggled for decades to retain their reservation lands. In 1836, local whites asked the General Assembly of Virginia to sell the Pamunkey Reservation. At that time, Virginia was a slave-holding state with strict racial laws. A number of Virginia lawmakers wanted to expel all American Indians and free African Americans from the state. They accused the Pamunkey of being too different from their Pamunkey ancestors to still have a reservation, and argued that intermarriage with other races had changed them. The Pamunkey petitioned the General Assembly to keep their reservation and eventually won. The case was one of many that the Pamunkey and Mattaponi would have to fight to keep their reservations. [Rountree; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman]

The [Nansemond] tribe managed to hold on to some of their lands until 1792. The petition filed to sell the remaining land holdings of the Nansemond was probably illegal and by law should never have taken place. But that's another sad story, and I'm not sure that people are ready to hear about that part of our Virginia history.

—Chief Emeritus Oliver Perry (Nansemond), published in: *We're Still Here*.
Richmond, Virginia: Palari Publishing, 2006.

Assimilation

When people lose their own ways of living and take on new ones it is called assimilation. In the centuries after European contact, many Piscataway, Nanticoke, and Powhatan individuals either chose or were forced to assimilate non-Native ways of living. Language, religion, and other aspects of culture usually change as a result of assimilation. Sometimes Native Chesapeake peoples assimilated when they left their homes in search of work or after marriage to a person from a different ethnic background. Sometimes tribal members chose to assimilate in order to escape the shame inflicted by the larger society, which stereotyped Indian people as ignorant or backwards. Some saw assimilation as a way to avoid more wars and conflict. [Tayac; Rountree; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman; Porter]

English efforts to change Native peoples were often driven by a sense of superiority—that English people were

civilized and that Native people were “savages.” Two major ways that the English brought about the assimilation of Native peoples were education and religious conversion. The colonists were aware of the tremendous importance that language plays in culture. Therefore, Native children were forced to learn English in schools, erasing Native languages from most tribal members’ lives. [Rountree; Tayac]

All Native American tribes had their own religions and spiritual beliefs long before Europeans arrived in North America. Conversion to European religions was not something all Native people of the Chesapeake were initially receptive to, but ultimately, many of them accepted the change. Some practiced their traditional beliefs in addition to the Christian customs, seeing no conflict between continuing their traditional religious observances and attending church. [Rountree; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman; Tayac]



St. Ignatius Church, Port Tobacco, Maryland, where Piscataway families have worshipped since the 1640s.

Courtesy St. Ignatius Church. Photo by Walter Larrimore, NMAI, 2006.

Ironically, churches and schools presented an unexpected opportunity that benefited Native Americans: they served as places where Chesapeake tribes could keep their communities together and maintain their identity. This positive aspect of Native churches and schools was an unexpected outcome of the racial segregation enforced by non-Natives. For example, the Chickahominy, the Mattaponi, and other Powhatan tribes formed their own Baptist congregations because they were not allowed to attend white churches. At the same time, a number of tribes started their own schools because their children could not attend schools with white children. For Powhatan,

Nanticoke, and Piscataway peoples who had lost their reservations, churches and schools helped to sustain distinctive communities. [Rountree, 1990]



Students in front of Sharon Indian School, ca. 1925. Photo courtesy Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe. Photographer unknown.

Assimilation did not erode all Native cultural practices. Among the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway, there have always been those who specialize in healing the sick and attending to the spiritual needs of the people. They knew which plants could heal certain illnesses; they knew how to care for injured people or those suffering from emotional disturbances, grief, or extreme hardship. Because non-Natives viewed Native cultures as inferior, some Native people had to practice these healing traditions in secret. Others, however, were open about their abilities and used their knowledge to help tribal members and people of other races as well. [Weslager; Tayac; Speck]

Surviving Poverty

When the Chesapeake tribes lost their lands, they also lost much of their access to the region’s rich natural resources. They were forced to fish in less bountiful creeks, rather than at prime spots they had always occupied on the rivers. They no longer owned large plots of land to plant and harvest crops. Still, many Native people found ways to survive by fishing, hunting, and farming as they had for hundreds of years. They also earned income by selling crafts, such as baskets and pottery, and taking other jobs near their homes. In this way they kept their connection to the land and its resources. [Rountree; Tayac; Nelson and Richardson interview]

Lacking good educational opportunities, Native Chesapeake people often had to work as low-paid laborers, and many lived in poverty. As the United States changed



*Men Digging Clay for Pottery Making, Pamunkey Reservation, King William County, Virginia, 1918
Photo by Frank G. Speck, NMAI.*

from an agricultural to an industrial society in the early twentieth century, economic opportunities developed in cities. Many Powhatan, Piscataway, and Nanticoke people sought work in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, New York, and Washington, D.C. While these jobs made it possible for many families to survive, they also made it more difficult for families to sustain their Native culture and for tribal communities to stay together.

Living with Racism

The Piscataway, Powhatan, and Nanticoke were subjected to racist social attitudes and laws that restricted their rights. Once reservations were lost, most Native Chesapeake peoples were classified as “free people of color.” Although they were not treated as terribly as enslaved African-Americans, Native peoples of the Chesapeake had far fewer rights than whites. They were segregated in churches, and were not allowed to legally marry white people in Maryland and Virginia. [Rountree, 1990; Tayac; Porter; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman]

We were the third race in a two-race state. I remember once traveling with my father, and we pulled into a gas station because I had to go to the bathroom and there was one marked “white” and one bathroom marked “colored.” I said, “Dad, what do I do?”

—Chief Stephen Adkins (Chickahominy), *Style Weekly*, September 2004.

Getting a basic education was difficult. In the first half of the twentieth century, Native Americans were barred from attending white public schools in the District of Columbia. Native children in southern Maryland were not allowed to attend white schools, but were allowed to attend black

schools. However, some parents refused to send their children to black schools because they wanted to maintain their Native identity. To get an education, Native children often went to an informal “school” at a relative’s or neighbor’s home, where they learned to read and write. Sometimes Native Americans were able to attend private parochial schools if their families were church members. Virginia and Delaware funded a tri-racial system of segregated schools for blacks, whites, and Indians. Native children who attended integrated schools were often the targets of racial hatred from other students. [Rountree, 1990; Tayac; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman]

There were bad feelings towards us when we were in school. We were harassed all the time by both the black and the white students just because we were different.

—Reeva “Rose Eagle” Tilley (Rappahannock), published in: *We’re Still Here*. Richmond, Virginia: Palari Publishing, 2006.

Acquiring a college education was a virtual impossibility for Native Americans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Affiliation with a church, however, occasionally opened a door for higher education. Chickahominy students who attended their community’s Baptist Church in Virginia were able to attend Bacone College in Oklahoma, a college that was established by the American Baptist Church in 1880 to serve American Indians.



Virginia Health Bulletin announcing the Racial Integrity Act, 1924. Courtesy of University at Albany, State University of New York.

To see full text, click on “Online Resources” at www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/education.

One of the most notorious examples of racism against the Native peoples of the Chesapeake region was the passage in 1924 of the Racial Integrity Act. The act was administered by a Virginia state official named Walter Plecker and others who sought to prevent interracial marriage. The law made it illegal for people to identify their race as Indian. It also implied that the Indian race no longer existed. Some members of Powhatan tribes were arrested for insisting that they were Indians; others were publicly humiliated when their children were expelled from white schools. [Rountree, 1990]

The law had a disastrous effect on the family and community structures of Virginia Native Americans. People were forced to move to other states so they could live freely and escape prejudice—travel when and where they wanted, marry who they chose to, and attend schools in their communities. The Racial Integrity Act remained an official law until it was overturned in 1967.

The worst thing about Plecker [was] . . . the community. People just left . . . You wonder how anyone could be so consumed with hate.

—Chief Kenneth Adams, (Upper Mattaponi),
Style Weekly, September 2004.

Political Activism and the Fight for Civil Rights

The tribes have had to fight hard to assert the civil rights that were denied them since colonial times. Activism heightened in the 1920s with the organization of the Second Powhatan Confederation in Virginia and the founding of the Nanticoke Indian Association in Delaware. [Rountree, Weslager, Speck] In 1961, members of Chesapeake tribes joined more than 500 Native people representing 90 tribes and bands assembled at the American Indian Chicago Conference to exchange information and discuss the development of a formal statement of Native American social, economic, and political aspirations.

During the 1960s and 1970s, some Piscataways were involved in the American Indian Movement, a nationwide Native effort to draw attention to the ongoing problems in Native communities and to encourage the U.S. government to honor its treaty-based commitments to tribal governments. Members of the

American Indian Movement participated in a week-long takeover of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C., in 1972, and the Longest Walk of 1978. [Billy Redwing Tayac Interview (NMAI), 2002] This protest action involved several hundred Native Americans who walked from San Francisco to New York City.

The Nanticokes at Bridgeton, New Jersey, were actively involved with national American Indian issues in the 1970s. At the same time, the Nanticoke Indian Association in Delaware focused on strengthening their tribal organization. This involved chartering and incorporating the tribe as a legal business. [Weslager; Porter; Tayac; Nanticoke Indian Association Interview] Powhatans were also active in the Coalition of Eastern Native Americans, an organization that was founded to secure recognition and eligibility for federal services for tribes that are not officially recognized by the federal government. [Rountree, 1990] In 1982, the Virginia Commonwealth created what is now known as the Virginia Council on Indians. This organization includes representatives from the eight tribes that are officially recognized by the state, and is responsible for conducting research and proposing recommendations on issues that affect American Indians in Virginia.

Chesapeake Native Communities Today

As a result of hard-won civil rights, participation in the Indian rights movement, and a strong commitment to fostering ethnic pride, all Native peoples have experienced a cultural and political renaissance over the past thirty years. In the Chesapeake region, the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway peoples have also established new structures of governance and new avenues for cultural expression within their communities. Today, chiefs in most cases are still the main leaders of Chesapeake regional tribes. In some communities, chiefs are elected and serve a term. An elected tribal leader may also be called a

When we dance at the powwow we feel the Great Spirit is here. When you see hawks circling overhead while dancers are in the circle in their regalia, you know the Great Spirit is here.

—Assistant Chief Earl Bass (Nansemond), published in: *We're Still Here*.
Richmond, Virginia: Palari Publishing, 2006.

chairperson. In other tribes, chiefs are still hereditary and hold lifelong positions. Most tribes also have councils that advise chiefs and vote on decisions. Gatherings such as social dinners, ceremonies, and powwows are now commonplace, and help to keep a sense of community alive.

In the twenty-first century, tribal members generally live in the same ways as their non-Indian neighbors. There is, however, a continuation of certain practices including hunting, farming, and cultural arts that draw on ancestral traditions. The Pamunkey people have made significant efforts to maintain their tradition of pottery making. Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway people also maintain oral traditions, or stories and other teachings, that instruct their children about unique Native ways of relating to the natural world. These oral teachings sustain the children's identities as Native peoples.



Left to right, Wayne Adkins (Chickahominy), Jacob Fortune-Deuber (Rappahannock), Ben Adams (Upper Mattaponi), Glenn Canaday (Chickahominy) —members of Virginia tribal delegation to England in contemporary ceremonial regalia, July 12, 2006. Photo by Katherine Fogden, NMAI.

The Nanticoke and Piscataway tribes have made strong efforts to revive annual ceremonial practices. The current Piscataway Green Corn ceremony honors the most abundant harvest. It also honors and gives special recognition to women and children. The Piscataways believe that corn is female and the kernels are her children. For this reason, corn and women are honored because they are givers of life. Nanticokes are also participating in cultural exchanges with Lenapes in Canada and Oklahoma to gain a better understanding of specific dances. Other tribal members are actively involved in preserving the ancestral traditions that remain, as well as revitalizing those that were lost, including the languages. [Rountree; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman; Tayac; Tayac observation of Lenape Oklahoma/New Jersey Nanticoke-Lenape gathering in Bridgeton, NJ (2001)]

Contemporary Challenges and Responses

Protecting land and resources is an important concern of the tribes, including the preservation of sacred sites. For Native Americans, sacred sites are places where important spiritual or historical events have occurred. They might be ancestral burial grounds or places where ceremonies are held.

There's a park in southern Maryland that's known as Piscataway National Park. We have twenty acres that we consider sacred that's inside the park. . . Our ancestors are buried there. . . It's our Mecca, our Wailing Wall. . . There's not a building on it. There's not any kind of concrete in the ground, there's no steel in the ground. It's the same way [as] when God made it.

—Chief Billy Redwing Tayac (Piscataway), 2002.

As land development continues, many historically and culturally important Native places are at risk. For example, since the early 1990s, the Mattaponi Tribe of Virginia has been engaged in a legal battle to halt a reservoir and dam project near their reservation. The Mattaponi are opposed to the project, which would flood more than 400 acres of wetlands, ancestral sites, and Mattaponi lands. Newport News city developers want the reservoir to meet future demands for water. The tribe says that the project would negatively affect the tribe's treaty-based fishing rights on the Mattaponi River, restrict access to sites and resources, and destroy wildlife habitat and many important tribal historical sites. In 2006, the issue went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which refused to take up the case and sent it back to the lower courts for consideration. The case is currently unresolved and pending further action.

Over the years, we have lost much of our land to greed as other people have taken our resources. Now, with this reservoir, people want to take our river as well.

—Assistant Chief Carl Custalow (Mattaponi), *Bay Journal*, May 2003.

Native American tribes existed as nations long before the arrival of European colonists. However, in 2006, many of the Nanticoke, Piscataway, and Powhatan communities still seek official government-to-government recognition as tribes from the state and federal governments. Currently, no tribes from the region are recognized by the United States. Six tribes were officially recognized by the

We were approved by the Maryland legislators and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for state recognition. Everyone said we were qualified. Then the governor's office decided that we weren't Indian enough. Just because somebody says I'm not an Indian, doesn't mean I'm not. Just as long as I walk this Earth I'll be Indian. I'm sixty-three years old; they can't take it from us.

—Mervin Savoy, Tribal Chair, (Piscataway Conoy Tribe).

We want the same rights that other Indians in our country have. We want our children to be eligible for the educational programs that other Indian children have access to, and we want our elders to be eligible for the health care they need.

—Chief Barry Bass (Nansemond), *Indian Country Today*, September 2004.

Potomac River
from Mt.
Vernon,
Virginia—
View of
Historic
Piscataway
Lands. Photo
by Edwin
Schupman,
NMAI.

Commonwealth of Virginia, but not until 1983, with two others being added in 1985 and 1989. These eight tribes are the Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Upper Mattaponi, Nansemond, Pamunkey, Rappahannock, and Monacan Indian Nation. The Monacan Indian Nation was not originally part of the Powhatan, Piscataway, or Nanticoke Chiefdoms. The Nanticoke tribe is recognized by the state of Delaware. The state of Maryland does not officially recognize any Native tribes. Native American communities desire these forms of legal recognition so that their long-standing status as nations will be acknowledged and further respected. They also want to exercise the rights and privileges granted to recognized tribes.

For the Native peoples of the Chesapeake region the events that began in the sixteenth century have created a legacy of ongoing challenges. For more than 400

years these Native people have had to struggle just to survive and to carve out an existence for themselves in the post-colonial world. Today, the issues of identity, tribal recognition, civil rights, cultural revitalization and preservation, as well as land and resource protection remain at the forefront of that existence. With persistence and strength, the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway will not only survive, but thrive into the twenty-first century and beyond. They will regain the heritage of the place that was theirs long before their encounter began with the strangers from across the sea.

We're still here and we're not going away! We still have a long way to go, and I hope the Virginia Indians who follow us will be driven to continue working to improve things.

—Assistant Chief Gene Adkins (Eastern Chickahominy Tribe), published in: *We're Still Here*. Richmond, Virginia: Palari Publishing, 2006.



ISSUES OF SURVIVAL FOR NATIVE COMMUNITIES OF THE CHESAPEAKE REGION

The following activity will help you explore important issues that affect the survival of Chesapeake Native American communities today.

1. Your teacher will divide your class into small working groups. Each group will be assigned one of the following research topics:

Issue 1: The Effects of Treaty Making

Issue 2: Denial of Civil Rights

Issue 3: The Importance of Legal Recognition

You will receive text to read, primary resources to study, and guidance on where to find additional resources.

2. Read the text and study the primary resource images and documents. As a group, discuss what you think are the important aspects of the topic. Use the questions provided to guide your discussion. Think about the various aspects of the topic and, as a group, take a position on a key issue. For example, students working on “The Importance of Legal Recognition” topic might take the position that “The Native American tribes of the Chesapeake region should receive federal recognition because...”
3. Outline your group’s position to determine what additional information you need, and conduct research to find answers to the questions you have. Some supplementary documents are listed on your materials for each topic. These should be read by every group member. They can be found on the National Museum of the American Indian website. Click on “Online Resources” at www.americanindian.si.edu/education.
4. Your group will develop a 15-minute class presentation to demonstrate your group’s position on the issue. Choose your own method of presentation—oral, written, video, poster, and so on.
5. You may use the following suggested outline to develop your presentation:
 - a. State the historical facts related to your issue.
 - b. State the present-day facts related to your issue.
 - c. Based on your research, state and elaborate upon your group’s position.
 - d. List and discuss the key factors that support your position.

Reading questions:

- What were the factors that made treaty negotiations difficult?
- Why are treaties with England still relevant to Chesapeake region tribes today?
- Who benefited the most during the seventeenth century from tributes specified in the Treaty of Middle Plantation?
- Who benefits the most today from tributes specified in the Treaty of Middle Plantation?

Treaties are agreements made between nations. During colonial times, the English viewed Indian tribes as separate autonomous nations and they often established treaties with them to make peace during times of war. Usually, treaty provisions specified that the Native Americans would give up portions of their lands and cease hostilities with the English. In exchange, the English colonists agreed not to attack the tribes and to set aside areas of land called reservations, or “manors,” for Native use. The English also promised to allow Indians to continue to hunt and fish in their accustomed places.

The 1666 Articles of Peace and Amity was a treaty between the Maryland Colony and the Piscataway Chiefdom. It stated, *That from this day forward there be an inviolable peace and amity between the Right honorable the Lord Proprietor of this Province and the Indians...to endure.* [Archives of Maryland Online, Vol. 15, pp. 289-91] Among other rights, it ensured that the Piscataway would not have to give up their lands. The Articles also promised that the Piscataway could fish, hunt, and gather crabs without disturbance.

One of the most important treaties in the Chesapeake region was the Treaty of Middle Plantation (Treaty between Virginia and the Indians). The English and a number of tribes in Virginia, including the Powhatan Chiefdom, signed the Treaty of Middle Plantation in 1677. The treaty specified an agreement that Indians would own their reservations and would be treated as Englishmen under the law. The English also agreed not to settle within three miles of an Indian reservation.

In addition to the reservations established in the Powhatan/English treaties of the 1600s, one of the provisions that the Natives insisted on was the right to hunt, fish, and gather natural resources. In exchange for these rights, the Powhatans agreed to pay a tribute of game to the Virginia governor every year. At the time, these tributes helped feed the colonists.

Provisions in treaties between the Native Americans and the English colonists were always established through negotiations. Sometimes these negotiations were difficult and took a long time to complete. Not only were they negotiating complex arrangements, such as the exchange of lands; they were also attempting to communicate in two completely different languages. Natives and colonists were also trying to comprehend each other's differing cultural values. For example, the Native people believed that the earth was sacred and that land was there for the benefit of all. Tribes had certain territories that they occupied, but individual people did not buy, sell, or hold title to plots of land.

Although the English did not uphold many of their promises and eventually left the Powhatan tribes with much smaller areas of land than they had agreed to during negotiations, the Powhatan have always felt that it was important and honorable to uphold their end of the agreement. Powhatan tribes, such as the Pamunkey and Mattaponi and sometimes non-reservation tribes such as the Chickahominy, still deliver their gifts to the Governor of Virginia. In the twenty-first century, this act has a far different meaning than it did in the seventeenth century. Today, paying the tribute of game is an expression of sovereignty for the tribes. It reminds the governor and people of Virginia that the Native Americans are still here, that they have never broken their treaty, that their reservation is still in place, and that their communities are alive and well.

Even though the United States government did not enter into treaties with the tribes of the Chesapeake region, the earlier colonial treaties still have relevance. They established the fact that Native nations existed here at the time the colonies were founded and after. This is very important for tribes today as they continue their efforts to keep their communities together and to assert their rights as Native nations. [Speck; Feest; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman; Rountree]

American Indians are members of sovereign tribal nations that have a unique legal and political relationship with the federal government. The essence of tribal sovereignty is the ability to govern and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of tribal citizens within tribal territory.

—An Introduction to Indian Nations in the United States, National Congress of American Indians, 2004.

Research resources:

For additional information on the importance of early treaties today, go to “Online Resources” at www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/education.

Group discussion:

As a group, brainstorm how the United States has used treaties, agreements, and accords over time. Think about world issues such as war, the environment, and trade.

Think about it: If you were a world leader today, how would you decide what other nations you would and would not enter into treaty negotiations with? What would happen if one nation broke a treaty today? How do you think the seventeenth-century leaders of the Chesapeake area tribes decided who they would and would not enter into treaty negotiations with? Do you think all sides got what they expected from those treaties?

THE EFFECTS OF TREATY MAKING

Primary Resources

XVI That every Indian King and Queen in the month of March every yeare with some of their great men tender their obedience to the R^t Honourable his Majesties Govern^r at the place

placed of his residence, whereever it shall be, and then and there pay the accustomed rent of twentieth beaver skinns, to the Govern^r and alsoe of their quit rent aforesaid, in acknowledgment that they hold their Crownes, and Lands of the great King of England.

Treaty Between Virginia and the Indians 1677, cover page and Article XVI. The Thomas Jefferson Papers, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division.

- XVI. That every Indian King and Queen in the month of March every yeare with some of their great men tender their obedience to the R^t Honourable his Majesties Govern^r at the place of his residence, whereever it shall be, and then and there pay the accustomed rent of twentieth beaver skinns, to the Govern^r and alsoe their quit rent aforesaid, in acknowledgment that they hold their Crownes, and Lands of the great King of England.

Pamunkey presentation of annual tribute to the Governor of Virginia, ca. 1928: (from left) Walter Bradby, Theodora Dennis Cook, Chief George Major Cook, Governor Harry Byrd, Pocahontas Cook, Willy Bradby, James Bradby, and Duckie Page. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of Warren Cook and Joyce Krigsvold.



Study question for primary resources:

What is significant about the fact that there are images of the annual tribute from both the early and late twentieth century?



Pamunkey presentation of annual tribute to the Governor of Virginia, 2003: (from left) Robert Gray, Pamunkey Chief William P. Miles, Governor Mark Warner, Pamunkey Assistant Chief Warren Cook, Gary Miles, and Jeff Brown. Photo by R. A. Whiteside. Photo courtesy of Pamunkey Tribe.

Reading questions:

- How did Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924 affect the civil rights of Native Americans?
- How did the fight against civil injustices help unite the Native tribes of the Chesapeake region?

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were difficult times for Native Americans. The wars between American Indians and colonial and American forces had ended and the reservation system was firmly entrenched throughout much of the country. Native people now fought battles against poverty, poor living conditions, lack of health care, limited educational opportunities, and racism. Native Americans could not attend the same schools as whites. They could not dine in the same restaurants, drink from the same water fountains, or use the same restrooms. The nation's response to Indian educational needs was to set up a boarding school system that separated children from their families and forced them to give up their languages, cultures, and traditional ways of life. Most Native Americans were not considered United States citizens until 1924; they could not vote or enjoy any of the other rights and privileges guaranteed in the United States Constitution. Lands that had been set aside as reservations for Indians were also coveted, particularly if they were found to contain valuable natural resources. During this time, millions of acres of Indian lands were acquired by non-Indians through fraudulent or unfair land deals.

Racism found its way into public policy, such as in Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which held that, as a result of interracial marriages, there were no longer any American Indians in Virginia. The act asserted that all people in Virginia were either white or black. Native people were classified as "free persons of color" and, thereby, denied their own identity. This law and others in Maryland, Delaware, and many other states forbade anyone, including Native Americans, from marrying people belonging to races other than their own. These policies were known as anti-miscegenation laws. [Rountree, 1990]

In the early 1900s, Native Americans began to organize and fight against unjust laws and social practices. The Chesapeake communities began to work together and with non-Native people who supported their cause. In the 1920s, a number of Powhatan tribes formed an official organization called the Second Powhatan Confederation. At the same time, the Nanticoke chartered the Nanticoke Indian Association in Delaware. A Piscataway leader visited and worked with both groups, hoping that a similar organization could be established in Maryland.

These political organizations and communities held meetings and celebrated with one another through powwows and traditional festivals. [Speck; Tayac, Weslager; Rountree]

As a result of a nationwide movement of people and organizations supporting social justice for Native Americans, laws were created during the twentieth century that began to restore civil rights. Following are two of these laws and their effects:

The 1924 American Indian Citizenship Act: This Act made all American Indians citizens of the United States, and gave American Indians the right to vote. The Powhatans in Virginia, however, would not vote for another twenty years because of the racial segregation and discrimination in the state. The act prompted the Powhatans and Nanticoke to meet and talk about how the act affected them.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act: Officially ended government-sanctioned racial discrimination in the United States. This act desegregated schools and churches, and led to the closure of the Powhatan and Nanticoke Indian schools. The Piscataway Catholics moved from the back of the church, where they had been made to sit, and occupied the front pews. [Tayac; Rountree; Weslager; Tayac interview with Grace Proctor Newman, 1999]

Research resources:

For additional information on racism and its effects on Native American identity, communities, and civil rights, go to "Online Resources" at www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/education.

Group discussion:

As a group, brainstorm about civil rights in America. What do you already know about civil rights?

Think about it: What do civil rights mean to you? Are civil rights a "black and white" issue? What are examples of different civil rights issues faced by various ethnic or racial communities in the United States today? Consider ways that the experiences of Native American people in the Chesapeake region relate to the experiences of others who have fought for civil rights in America.

THE DENIAL OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Primary Resources

Letter from
Walter Plecker
to voting
registrars,
health care
workers, school
superintendents,
and clerks of
the court, 1943
(MSS 10972).
Special
Collections,
University
of Virginia
Library.

has 5/2
Plecker

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Health
Bureau of Vital Statistics
Richmond

January 1943 -

Local Registrars, Physicians, Health
Officers, Nurses, School Superintendents,
and Clerks of the Courts

Dear Co-workers:

Our December 1942 letter to local registrars, also mailed to the clerks, set forth the determined effort to escape from the negro race of groups of "free issues," or descendants of the "free mulattoes" of early days, so listed prior to 1865 in the United States census and various types of State records, as distinguished from slave negroes.

Now that these people are playing up the advantages gained by being permitted to give "Indian" as the race of the child's parents on birth certificates, we see the great mistake made in not stopping earlier the organized propagation of this racial falsehood. They have been using the advantage thus gained as an aid to intermarriage into the white race and to attend white schools, and now for some time they have been refusing to register with war draft boards as negroes, as required by the boards which are faithfully performing their duties. Three of these negroes from Caroline County were sentenced to prison on January 12 in the United States Court at Richmond for refusing to obey the draft law unless permitted to classify themselves as "Indians."

Some of these mongrels, finding that they have been able to sneak in their birth certificates unchallenged as Indians are now making a rush to register as white. Upon investigation we find that a few local registrars have been permitting such certificates to pass through their hands unquestioned and without warning our office of the fraud. Those attempting this fraud should be warned that they are liable to a penalty of one year in the penitentiary (Section 5099a of the Code). Several clerks have likewise been actually granting them licenses to marry whites, or at least to marry amongst themselves as Indian or white. The danger of this error always confronts the clerk who does not inquire carefully as to the residence of the woman when he does not have positive information. The law is explicit that the license be issued by the clerk of the county or city in which the woman resides.

To aid all of you in determining just which are the mixed families, we have made a list of their surnames by counties and cities, as complete as possible at this time. This list should be preserved by all, even by those in counties and cities not included, as these people are moving around over the State and changing race at the new place. A family has just been investigated which was always recorded as negro around Glade Springs, Washington County, but which changed to white and married as such in Roanoke County. This is going on constantly and can be prevented only by care on the part of local registrars, clerks, doctors, health workers, and school authorities.

Please report all known or suspicious cases to the Bureau of Vital Statistics, giving names, ages, parents, and as much other information as possible. All certificates of these people showing "Indian" or "white" are now being rejected and returned to the physician or midwife, but local registrars hereafter must not permit them to pass their hands uncorrected or unchallenged and without a note of warning to us. One hundred and fifty thousand other mulattoes in Virginia are watching eagerly the attempt of their pseudo-Indian brethren, ready to follow in a rush when the first have made a break in the dike.

Very truly yours,
W. A. Plecker
W. A. Plecker, M. D.
State Registrar of Vital Statistics

**Study
question
for primary
resource:**

What does the language of the letter tell you about Plecker's viewpoints and the social attitudes of the time?

Reading questions:

- Why is federal recognition important to Native American tribes?
- What is it about the histories of the Powhatan, Nanticoke, and Piscataway tribes that make it difficult for them to achieve federal recognition? Consider the impact of early contact, treaties made and broken, the forced movements of peoples, wars, and racism.

Native American tribes were independent sovereign nations before the arrival of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere. Tribes interacted with one another and recognized each other's status as nations. Upon arriving in North America, Europeans (and later, the Americans) continued to deal with the tribes as sovereign nations. Land was exchanged and peace established when treaties were made between sovereign Native nations and governments of Europe and the United States. Neither the colonists nor the Americans consistently honored treaty provisions, but the act of treaty making established the legal precedent of recognizing tribes as sovereign entities. This precedent, dating back to the early days of treaty making, has been upheld in various court decisions, legislative acts, and presidential decisions. As a result, hundreds of Native American tribes today are still recognized as sovereign entities within the United States.

Today, there are four different types of recognition that tribes may have or seek to attain:

1. **Native Nation-to-Native Nation**—Historically, tribes recognized each other's status. They formed trade agreements, military and political alliances, and so on. Sometimes, they warred with one another. Today, tribes continue to interact with one another through various political, educational, economic, and tribal organizations, such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET).
2. **International**—Many tribes, such as those of the Chesapeake region, were recognized by the governments of Europe through treaties and other interactions. Today, tribes continue to participate in the international arena. They participate in organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and interact with the indigenous communities of other countries. In some cases, they continue to interact with the national governments of Europe, Canada, and Mexico.
3. **State**—Many tribes are legally recognized as governmental entities by the states. Often, as with Virginia tribes, this is a carryover from colonial times, when treaties were made with the original colonies, and later,

recognition was assumed by the state itself. In these instances, states and tribes continue to interact with one another in matters of governance. Eight tribes are currently recognized by the state of Virginia, none by Maryland. Delaware recognizes the Nanticoke tribe.

4. **Federal**—This is legal recognition of tribes by the U.S. government. Historically, Native nations were recognized by the U.S. through treaties, which are confirmed by the U.S. Senate, and executive decisions made by the President. Today, there are more than 560 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. In addition, there are more than 275 tribes within the U.S. that are not federally recognized. Tribes may seek federal recognition through processes available in all three branches of the government—executive, legislative, and judicial. Many tribes of the Chesapeake are either currently in the process of seeking federal recognition through one of these means or are considering it.

Today, most Native nations seek to achieve federal recognition. When the U.S. recognizes a tribe, it affirms the tribe's status as a sovereign nation and acknowledges the distinct powers that only that tribe has. Tribes consider recognition of their sovereignty very important. Recognition also obligates the U.S. to carry out a federal "trust" responsibility to the tribe. This means that the tribe is eligible for certain economic, health care, education, housing, agricultural, and cultural benefits. Achieving federal recognition is a very difficult and rigorous process. Tribes must commit significant resources and time. None of the Chesapeake region tribes are currently recognized by the federal government. However, many of the tribes are actively pursuing the recognition they have thus far been denied. [Interview with Sequoyah Simermeyer, National Congress of American Indians, 2006]

Research resources:

For additional information on examples of the paths to federal recognition for tribes of the Chesapeake region, go to "Online Resources" at www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/education.

Group discussion:

As a group, brainstorm about why the federal government recognizes some tribal nations, but not others. Why would some state governments recognize tribes that the federal government does not?

Think about it: If another government refuses to recognize your government, does your government still exist? Consider contemporary international examples. What are some reasons tribal nations would or would not want to be recognized by the federal government? By state governments?

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL RECOGNITION

Primary Resources

On July 12, 2006, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) hosted a press conference and departure ceremony for an official delegation of Virginia Native Americans, who were traveling by invitation to England as part of the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. The trip was organized jointly by the Federal Jamestown 400th Commemoration Commission and the British Jamestown 2007 Committee. Following are some photographs taken at the event at the NMAI as well as quotes from a *Washington Post* article about the event.

Study questions for primary resources:

How does this trip to England fit into the context of the overall histories of the Virginia tribes?

What are the most significant aspects of this trip for Virginia tribes?



Stephen Adkins,
Chief of the
Chickahominy
Tribe. Photo
by Katherine
Fogden, NMAI.

“The Virginia tribes have been so invisible,” [Stephen] Adkins said, “that although they were the first tribes the colonists encountered four centuries ago, they have yet to be officially recognized by the federal government—unlike 562 other tribes, primarily in the West, that are considered sovereign nations.” Those tribes are offered federal health, education and housing benefits.

—*Washington Post*, July 13, 2006



Wayne Adkins,
Chickahominy
tribal member.
Photo by
Katherine
Fogden, NMAI.

It’s also very humbling that we’re about to embark on a historic trip to England where we’ll be greeted as heads of state, heads of our individual Indian nations. That’s very humbling to us as we renew the ties created by some of the treaties that we had from the 1600s.

—Wayne Adkins (Chickahominy) speaking at the NMAI departure ceremony.

Six of the eight Virginia tribes are lobbying Congress for that federal recognition. Their motto: “First to welcome. Last to be recognized.”

—*Washington Post*, July 13, 2006.



A delegation of Virginia chiefs who testified before Congress on behalf of federal recognition, in 2002. From left: Chief Barry Bass (Nansemond), Chief Stephen Adkins (Chickahominy), Chief Kenneth Branham (Monacan), Chief Marvin Bradby (Eastern Chickahominy), Chief Anne Richardson (Rappahannock), and Chief Ken Adams (Upper Mattaponi). Photo by Deanna Beacham (Weapemeoc ancestry).

CHESAPEAKE NATIVE PEOPLES, ca. 1610

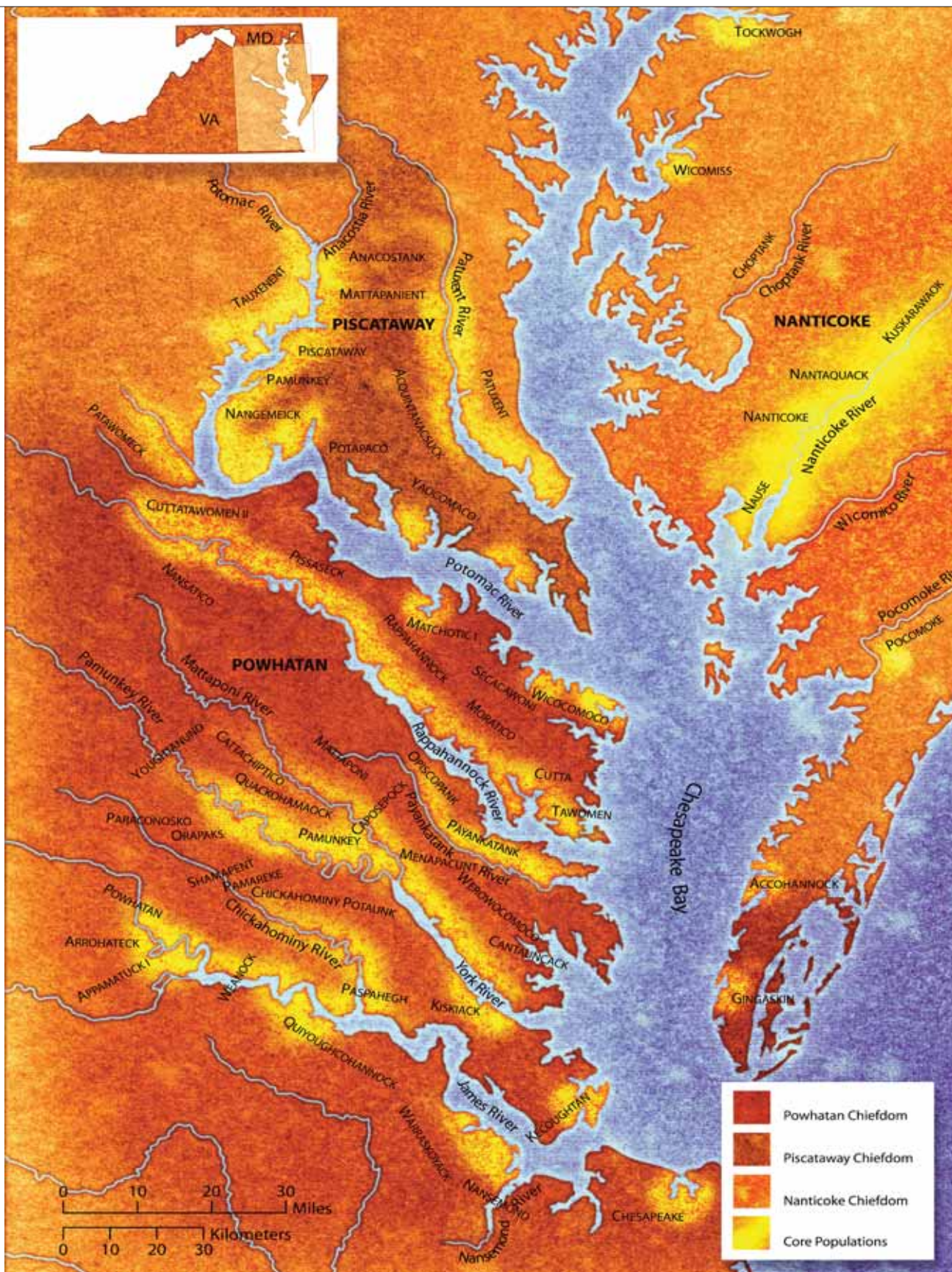


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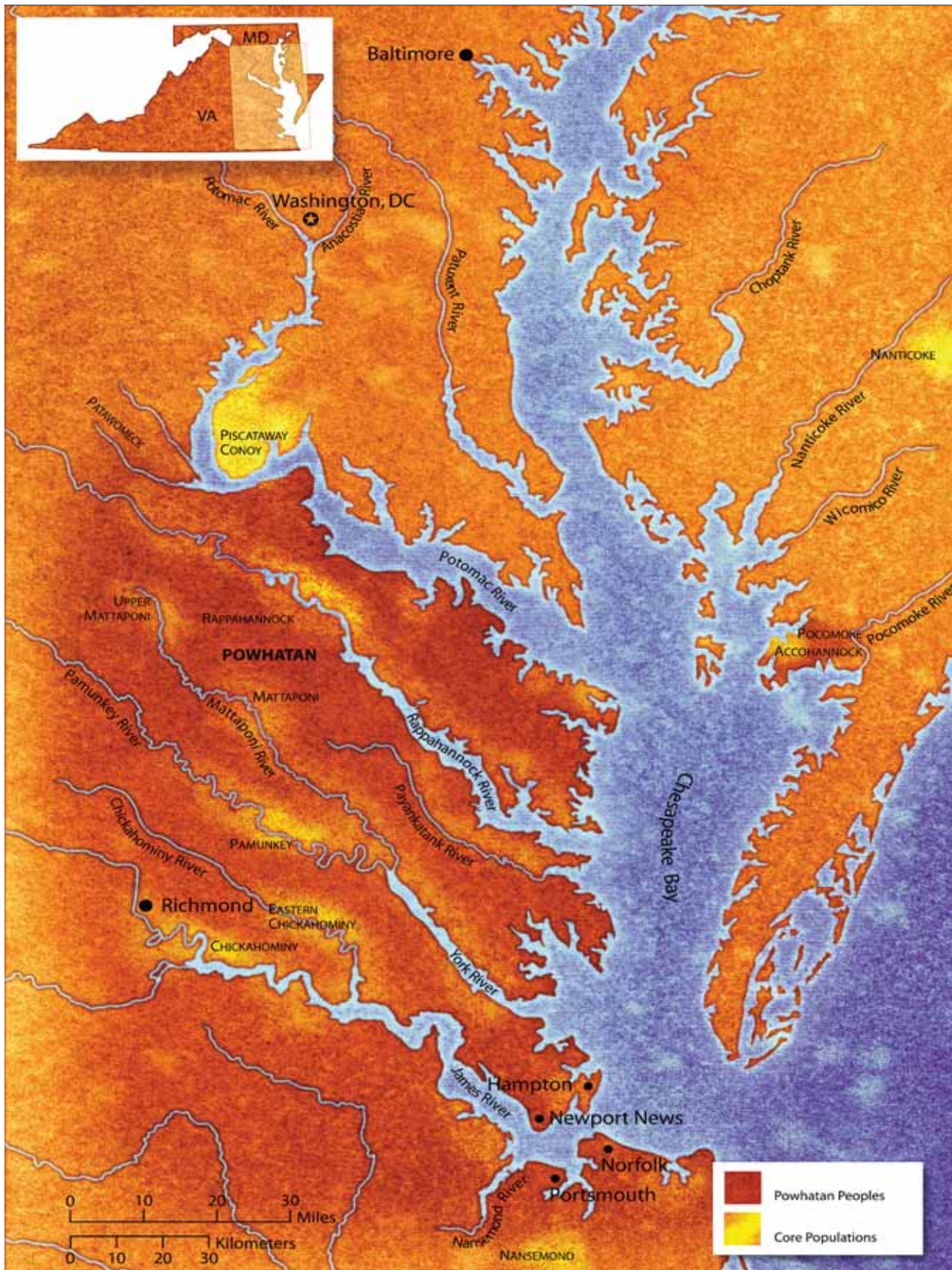


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RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Powhatan Communities

Virginia Council on Indians

<http://indians.vipnet.org>

This website has links to all of the state-recognized tribes in Virginia. News and events are posted.

United Indians of Virginia

www.unitedindiansofva.org

Chickahominy Indian Tribe

8200 Lott Cary Road
Providence Forge, VA 23140

Eastern Chickahominy Tribe

<http://www.cied.org>

Mattaponi Tribe

<http://www.baylink.org/mattaponi>

Nansemond Tribe

www.nansemond.org

Pamunkey Tribe

www.baylink.org/pamunkey

Rappahannock Tribe

HCR 1 Box 402
Indian Neck, VA 23148
(804) 769-0260

Upper Mattaponi Tribe

www.uppermattaponi.org

Nanticoke Communities

Nanticoke Indian Association

27073 John J. Williams Highway
Millsboro, DE 19966
(302) 945-3400
www.nanticokeindians.org

Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape Indians of New Jersey

18 East Commerce Street
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
(856) 455-6910
<http://www.nanticoke-lenape.org>

Piscataway Communities

Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs

<http://www.dhcd.state.md.us/Website/programs/mcia/mcia.aspx>

This website provides information on the state program that coordinates governmental concerns for Native Americans residing in Maryland.

Piscataway Indian Nation

www.piscatawaynation.org

The Piscataway Conoy Confederacy and Subtribes

P.O. Box 1484
La Plata, MD 20646
(301) 609-7625

Exhibits

National Museum of the American Indian:

1. *Return to a Native Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake*, 2nd level Mezzanine
2. Pamunkey Exhibit, *Our Lives: Contemporary Life and Identities*, 3rd level

Maryland

Historic St. Mary's City

Yaocomoco Indian Woodland Hamlet
www.stmaryscity.org

Piscataway Indian Museum

www.piscatawayindians.org

Delaware

Nanticoke Indian Museum

www.nanticokeindians.org

Virginia

Pamunkey Museum

www.baylink.org/pamunkey

Mattaponi Museum

www.baylink.org/mattaponi

Jamestown Powhatan Village

http://www.visitwilliamsburg.com/jamestown_settlement.htm

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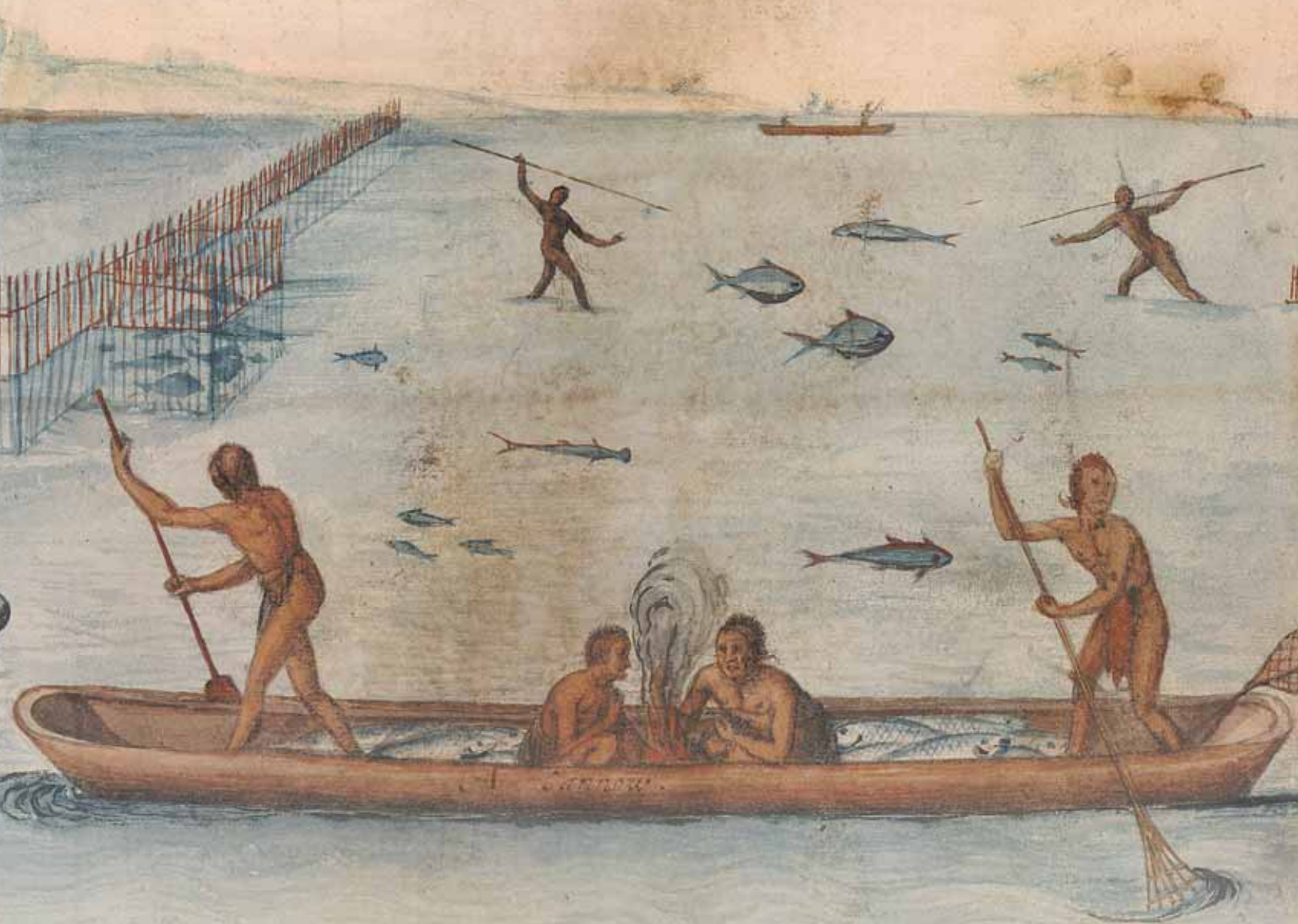
*Nanticoke
Woman Using
Corn Mortar:
Photo by
Frank G. Speck,
ca. 1911–14.*

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Captain Nelson and Anne Richardson by G. Tayac (NMAI); Nanticoke Indian Association Committee by G. Tayac (2000, 2001, 2002); G. Tayac observation of Lenape Oklahoma/New Jersey Nanticoke-Lenape gathering in Bridgeton, New Jersey, in 2000; Grace Proctor Newman with G. Tayac, 1999; Chief Billy Redwing Tayac, 2002; Sequoyah Simermyer, National Congress of American Indians, 2006; Mervin Savoy, Tribal Chair (Piscataway Conoy Tribe), 2006.



Front Cover Illustrations:

The Town of Pomeiooc, 1585–1593. John White (ca. 1540–ca. 1618). Watercolor.
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Children Playing “Bear in Ring,” Nanticoke, Delaware. Photo by Frank G. Speck,
ca. 1911–14.

Articles of Peace, opening page of the 1677 treaty between Virginia and the Indians.
Courtesy Library of Congress.

Leaders from Virginia tribal delegation prior to departure for England, July 12, 2006.
Photo by Katherine Fogden, NMAI.

Piscataway Awakening of Mother Earth Ceremony, April 2001.
Photo by John Harrington.

Table of Contents Illustration:

Falls of the Rappahannock River. Photo by Frank G. Speck, 1920.

Back Cover Illustration:

Indians Fishing, 1585–1593. John White (ca. 1540–ca. 1618).
Watercolor. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



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